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James M. Beck.

THE MEMORY OF McKINLEY

PHILADELPHIA, June 6, 1908. -- James M. Beck, formerly Assistant Attorney-General in the McKinley administration, to-day delivered the oration at the dedication of the McKinley statue, on the south side of the Plaza of the City Hall, in this city.

After speaking of McKinley's career as a soldier, Legislator and Executive, and justifying the Insular Policy as the crowning achievement of his career, Mr. Beck said in part:

While we cannot raise the veil of the future, yet we can proudly claim that the immediate results of McKinley's policy of expansion have been for the good of the Republic and the greater good of civilization. With greater truth than the third Napoleon we can say: "The Republic is peace." Never was its power

greater, its influence more peaceful, or its honor more unsullied. It has become the great arbitrator of nations. Its only diplomacy has been that of transparent candor, and to it, in the last decade, the world has looked for a just solution of many intricate problems. When Pekin was in a state of revolution, while the soldiers of the Republic marched shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of England, Germany, Russia and Japan, to the relief of the beleaguered legations, it was America which took the tolerant position that no state of war existed with China. When China was threatened with dismemberment, it was to President McKinley that it turned for protection and through him its integrity was largely preserved. It was our country which softened the terms of peace, returned the unused portion of its indemnity and secured the policy of the "open door." When the Russo-Japanese War again threatened to involve the integrity of Chinese territory, it was to President Roosevelt that Kaiser Wilhelm turned to enlist his good offices to secure a restriction of the field of operation. It was again our country which brought Japan and Russia, after a bloody war, into friendly conference and secured the Treaty of Portsmouth. The Hague Conference may owe its initiative to the Czar, but it owes its continuance and beneficial results in large part to the American policy as formu-

knew he knew well; but he never sought to "box the compass" of human knowledge. He never pretended to have a remedy for every ill, a conclusion for every question, and words for every occasion. It could not be said of him, as Sydney Smith said of Lord John Russell, that

> "there is nothing he would not undertake. I believe he would perform an operation for stone, build St. Peter's, assume (with or without ten minutes' notice) the command of the Channel Fleet, and no one would discover from his manner that the patient had died, that St. Peter's had tumbled down, and that the Channel Fleet had been knocked to atoms."

McKinley did not seek to change in a day conditions which required decades for their due and orderly adjustment. He was not unmindful of the serious evils, to which our rapid expansion had given rise. He gave them serious thought and conservative action. As Mr. Cortelyou has recently said:

> "But to deal with them effectively without shattering the interwoven and delicate fabric of the forces that were co-operating for the welfare of the country—that was the question."

He was a conservative, not a radical: an evolutionist, not a revolutionist. A great leader of a party, he became by a "gentle persistency," worthy of Lincoln, a greater leader of the whole people, but his complete

mastery of men and events never lessened the self-effacing modesty of his nature.

He had neither the austere mastery of men of Washington, the constructive genius of Hamilton, the philosophic breadth of Jefferson, the brilliant magnetism of Clay, nor the profound reasoning of Webster. His nearest analogue is Lincoln. Like Lincoln, he had the genius of common sense, that instinctive sense of and regard for the just relation of things to each other; like Lincoln, he had profound sympathy with the inmost thoughts, the deepest feelings, the loftiest aspirations of the American people; like Lincoln, he had the gift of grasping the fundamental principles underlying a controversy and interpreting them to the masses in convincing phrases. Above all, like Lincoln, he had that greatest of all dynamic powers, a great, loving, sympathetic heart. Of both it could be written in the inspired words of the great Apostle:

> "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up.
>
> Doth not behave unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil.
>
> Beareth, all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Such was Lincoln! Such was McKinley!

His very sympathy subjected him to the unjust charge that he was a vacillating opportunist. Such critics mistook cautious deliberation, tactful sympathy,

courteous toleration of the views of others, practical recognition of the inevitable limitations of political power, with a timorous spirit. He was not an egotist and recognized the necessity and therefore the duty of concession to the views of others in a democratic commonwealth.

Indeed, his whole career showed that under his gentle demeanor and considerate courtesy and unfailing tolerance, there lay an iron will which was as a stone wall covered with flowers.

On the eve of the Spanish-American War, a committee of the Board of Trade of an Ohio city came to the White House to urge him, as citizens of his own State, to declare war. It happened that Captain Sigsbee, of the *Maine,* was in the Executive Room when the committee was ushered in, and, after the delegation had stated its purpose, the President excused himself for a moment, turned to Captain Sigsbee and, clasping his hand, said in a voice sufficiently loud for the Ohio delegation to hear him:

> "Captain Sigsbee, you never did a finer thing for the honor of your country than when, after the explosion of the *Maine,* you requested your fellow-countrymen to suspend judgment."

The delegation took the gentle hint and departed wiser if sobered men.

His faithful secretary, than whom none in public

life possibly understood him better, has recently given an instance of his firmness and deliberation when essentials were at stake. When not only his own party in Congress, but a great majority of the American people were clamoring for an immediate declaration of war with Spain, the President, at the risk of his own popularity, stood like a stone wall against that course. When, however, further opposition was fruitless he prepared a message to be sent to Congress recommending intervention in the affairs of Cuba. He believed that when the message was made public the life of every American on the island would be imperiled. To quote Mr. Cortelyou:

> "The President was sitting with his Cabinet, and when prominent Senators and Representatives and some of those present were urging him to send in his message at once, they declared that any further delay might mean political destruction for his administration and party. Mr. McKinley sent for me to bring the message to him. I laid it on the table before him. Just then there came an Army cablegram from Fitzhugh Lee (our consul at Havana), saying that it would be dangerous to act until he sent further word. But at that moment a number of those in the room again pressed the President to send his message before Congress immediately. Mr. McKinley could hardly have been under greater pressure. He caught the string to the bell, but suddenly

he caught his hand, raised it and brought his fist down on the table with a bang, as he said, in a clear voice, 'That message is not going to Congress so long as there is a single remaining life in danger in Cuba. Here,' turning to me, 'put that in the safe until I call for it.' "

His unfailing courtesy to those who not only differed with him, but bitterly assailed his policy, may be illustrated by two incidents.

His insular policy had no more sincere or unsparing critic than the late Senator Hoar. In the latter's memoirs we learn that the President, after these bitter attacks, invited the Massachusetts Senator to the White House. The Senator thus describes the interview:

"He greeted me with the delightful and affectionate cordiality which I always found in him. He took me by the hand and said: 'How are you feeling this winter, Mr. Senator?' I was determined there should be no misunderstanding. I replied at once: 'Pretty pugnacious, I confess, Mr. President.' The tears came into his eyes and he said, grasping my hand again:

'I shall always love you, whatever you do.' "

The other incident was told me by a member of his Cabinet and an eye-witness. On one occasion, at a Cabinet meeting, one of his secretaries asked the President to remove summarily a subordinate because of a

public statement which reflected upon his departmental superior. The reflection was more thoughtless than intentional. McKinley took the printed statement and carefully examined it, and, knowing circumstances of palliation, of which the secretary was ignorant, turned to the secretary and said, "If this is a reflection on you, Mr. Secretary, it is equally one on me as President of the United States," and the Secretary promptly said, "It is an insult to you and that is a double reason why he should be instantly removed. If you so regard it, will you not remove him, Mr. President?" And the President, quietly putting the paper in his pocket, said, "Well, if upon further consideration I regard this as a reflection upon me, I think I shall forgive him."

Who can forget his courteous expression of regret after he was shot, that this tragic event should mar the festal occasion at which it happened? His tenderness for his invalid wife was but the perfect flower of his knightly courtesy to all. Even to his base assassin he had extended the right hand of fellowship.

Time will not suffice to dwell upon his many amiable and noble characteristics, and yet in this presence, where are gathered his brave comrades of the "Grand Army of the Republic," I must not fail to dwell, though but briefly, upon his patriotism, which with him was ever a passionate emotion.

In all his public life, unless we except its beautiful and pathetic end, nothing is nobler and truer than its

beginning, when as a boy of eighteen he heard the call of his country and as a private followed its beckoning flag to the front. Like every act of his life, it was not an impulse born of passing enthusiasm or love of adventure, but a deliberately conceived act of patriotic duty. Only a few years before impaired health had compelled him to leave college in his junior year and he was then earning a scanty livelihood as a public school teacher. He could well plead his extreme youth, his dependent family, his impaired health.

Visiting the City of Columbus, he saw a regiment departing for the front. An unimpassioned boy, thoughtful rather than emotional, neither the spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, or other pride, pomp or circumstance of war had any call for him But the flag had a message for him, an imperious call to duty, and on his return home he told his mother that he must go, and that mother, with the Spartan fortitude of so many American mothers at that fateful and ever-glorious period, simply said:

> "If you think it is your duty to fight for your country, I think you should go.

Thus he joined that noble army of young men who, in the dark days of 1861, left their farms, their shops, their counting houses, their homes, their families, to offer their lives, if need were, to save the Republic. When General Grant was the guest of honor at a great dinner in Germany, he was hailed as the "Saviour of

his country," to which the great commander modestly replied: "It was the young men, and not I, who saved the Republic." Again, when with failing pen he finished his memoirs, he simply dedicated the recital of glorious achievements "To the American Soldier and Sailor."

The tribute was deserved. Only He, who "counteth all our sorrows," will ever appreciate the deathless glory and infinite sacrifices of the volunteers of 1861. From Bull Run to Appomattox they struggled bravely on. To many, the Wilderness was a great Gethsemane, in which they felt "sweat as of great drops of blood"; to others, the shell-stormed streets of Gettysburg were a *via dolorosa,* which they trod to a martyr's death; to others, the heights of Fredericksburg were a Calvary, in which they repeated the infinite tragedy of the Cross. Had young McKinley fallen as so many others, what appreciation would he have had? A sorrowing mother to ceaselessly lament him while life remained, a few comrades to decorate with each recurring spring his grave, but otherwise he would simply have joined that ghostly army, of which the Abbe Perreyve writes:

> "Unseen by the corporal eyes, but too clearly visible to the mind's eye, the great army of the dead, the army of the slain, the abandoned, the forgotten; the army of cruel torture and prolonged infirmities, which pursues its fatal march behind what we call glory."

Of McKinley's fidelity as a soldier, let his commanding officer, General Hayes, speak:

> "The night was never too dark, the weather was never too cold, there was no sleet or storm, or hail or snow, that was in the way of his prompt and efficient performance of every duty."

At Antietam, Kernstown, Opequan, Fisher's Creek, Winchester and Cedar Hill, he distinguished himself by conspicuous acts of bravery, and received therefor the reward he most cherished—a commission "for gallantry and meritorious services," with the simple signature of "Abraham Lincoln."

His training as a soldier prepared him for that tragic end, than which nothing more beautiful or pathetic has happened in our history.

He had entered his second administration with the liveliest expectations of beneficent results which would surpass all that he had accomplished. At home prosperity, peace and mutual sympathy were everywhere abundant. His visits South after the Spanish-American War had forever healed the wounds of our great civil conflict. Never was there less feeling among the classes and sections, never less murmurs of discontent. Perhaps the crown of his achievements was that "era of good feeling."

Mr. Cortelyou has recently told us that at this time he often heard McKinley say with deep emotion, "I

can no longer be called the President of a party; I am the President of the whole people."

In this spirit he went to Buffalo, there to realize an unconscious prediction of his own lips as to his own end. Nine years ago he had stood where I stand now, and, speaking within these walls to many now here assembled, said of the pathetic end of Grant:

> "And when he had finished that work, he laid down his pen, and, *like a good soldier,* said to his Master, 'Now, let thy will be done, not mine.'"

"*Like a good soldier,*" McKinley faced death and accepted his tragic end. The pathos of that death has rarely been equaled. It touched as few others the great heart of the world. One can recall the sad verses of McKinley's true friend and tried counsellor, John Hay:

> "My short and happy day is done,
> The long and lonely night comes on;
> And at my door the pale horse stands
> To carry me to unknown lands.
>
> His whinny shrill, his pawing hoof,
> Sound dreadful as a gathering storm,
> And I must leave this sheltering roof
> And joys of life so soft and warm.
>
> Tender and warm the joys of life,
> Good friends, the faithful and the true;
> My rosy children and my wife,
> So sweet to kiss, so fair to view.

So sweet to kiss, so fair to view—
The night comes on, the light burns blue;
And at my door the pale horse stands
To bear me forth to unknown lands."

To him was permitted, although unconsciously, a farewell to the people, whom he had led to high achievement and from whom he was to be taken forever.

Like the farewell address of Washington, his last public utterance was a plea not only for a greater America, but for "peace on earth, good will among men."

> "God and man," said he, "have linked the nations together. No nation can longer be indifferent to any other,"

and then, with hands outstretched as if in benediction in the clear sunshine of that September day, he prayed that

> "God will graciously vouchsafe properity and peace to all our neighbors and like blessings to all the peoples and powers of the earth."

Such was the last public utterance of William McKinley.

On the following day, with his accustomed graciousness, the President stepped from the eminence from which he had addressed the people and stood on a level with them, extending, as their friend and brother, the right hand of fellowship to all who sought it. To old or young, rich or poor, powerful or weak, native born

or foreign born, to one and all, that never-to-be-forgotten kindly glance and the genial clasp of his right hand. It was in that moment of popular triumph and overflowing good-will that a miserable wretch betrayed him with a treachery to which there is hardly a parallel in baseness since Judas Iscariot betrayed his Master with a kiss.

From the lips of the man who stood next to him, and after the fatal shot encircled McKinley with his arm, I have within a few days again heard the tragic tale. After the fatal bullet struck him, McKinley stood erect "like a soldier," and then, without a change in his countenance or a tremor in his voice, said to Mr. Milburn:

"Did that man shoot me?"

"I fear he did, Mr. President," was the sad reply.

The President then noticed a dozen strong arms which had seized the assassin and threatened to tear him limb from limb. "Let no one harm him," the President said, calmly. No utterance could have been more characteristic. It was not maudlin sympathy, but a desire that even this base wretch should not be the victim of mob rule. Again he thus held inviolate the honor of his country and the majesty of law.

Neither then nor in the few days of lingering pain which followed were any words of bitterness heard from his lips. And yet to him, with the simple faith of his fathers, there was the "kindly light," which il-

luminated the "encircling gloom," and "at eventide there was light." As bravely as he had ridden down the lines at Kernstown he faced Death, and when the end was near he simply said:

> "Good-bye, all; good-bye! It is God's way. His will be done."

Thus he had spoken of his great commander, Grant:

> "And when he had finished his work he laid down his pen and, like a good soldier, said to his Master, 'Now, let thy will be done; not mine.'"

My fellow-citizens, no memorial that we can fashion with our hands can be so beautiful as the universal sorrow with which men of every race, every class, every creed, every nation, heard the tolling of the bells on that fourteenth day of September, seven years ago. The world paid him the highest honor of its tears. On the day of his funeral, the giant industries of America paid him the rare tribute of their momentary silence and the shining pathway of steel over which his body passed to its last home amid the lamentations of the people was strewn with flowers.

Thus it came to pass, as he would most dearly have wished, that it could be said of him, as was said of another William the Silent:

> "As long as he lived he was the guiding star of a whole brave nation, and, when he died, the little children cried in the streets."

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